

## Civil War Book Review

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### Grander in Her Daughters: Florida's Women During the Civil War

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## Review

McMillen, Sally G.

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**Revels, Tracy J.** *Grander in Her Daughters: Florida's Women during the Civil War*. University of South Carolina Press, \$29.95 ISBN 1570035598

### An Untold Story

#### The Civil War and the Women of Florida

Florida was grand in her sons, but grander in her daughters observed a Madison, Florida woman. Tracy Revels, an associate professor of History at Wofford College in South Carolina, makes good use of this quote to explore Florida women's experiences during the Civil War. Despite the many books published annually on the American Civil War, Revels has found an untouched subject. Here we have an admiring, straightforward account that is broad in covering the experiences of elite whites, slave women, poor Cracker women (as she labels them), and female Unionists. Using extensive sources, Revels lets women's words tell their tale, quoting from diaries and letters to reveal the war's impact and their responses to it. As one might expect, most material comes from elite white women, the ones who were most likely to leave written records.

Though physically removed from the full heat of the battlefield, those on Florida's home front witnessed skirmishes and raids and felt the constant threat of Union occupation and the northern blockade. Florida was the least populated state in the Confederacy and experienced less physical devastation than states farther north and west, but it had more than its share of loyal Confederate women.

There is little here that will surprise anyone familiar with Confederate women's experiences from earlier studies by George Rable, Drew Gilpin Faust, and LeAnn Whites. Most Florida white women responded with both outrage and shock at the election of that black Republican, Abraham Lincoln, and enthusiastically supported Florida's secession—the third state to leave the Union. They rallied behind the cause, sewing clothing and uniforms for soldiers,

donating farm implements and animals to the military effort, and sending home-grown produce to hungry men. Florida was overwhelmingly agrarian, so most women experienced more than their share of isolation. Despite the difficulties of travel during wartime, a number of families fled danger or moved in with kin when loneliness and hardship overwhelmed them.

Revels seeks to determine what was unique about Florida women. Like so many Confederate women, all these females faced new burdens, challenges, and responsibilities. Revels feels that Florida's frontier heritage was especially strong, for most residents were recent emigrants from other states. This meant that class identity was still in flux. More women than the norm experienced isolation and loneliness due to the rural nature of the state. At the end of the book, Revels tries to set her study apart from earlier ones. She concludes that Florida women after the War used their legacy of strength and self-reliance to focus on practical matters and turned to their families as their mainstay, conclusions that reflect what many other southern women also experienced.

Anyone interested in the experiences of Confederate women will appreciate that a void has now been filled, at last giving Florida women a voice in existing Civil War scholarship.

*Sally G. McMillen is the Mary Reynolds Babcock Professor and Chair of the History Department at Davidson College*